

## **Comprehensive Planning Committee Fiscal Year 2002**

The Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) began the fiscal year by working with the Planning Department to prepare and send out a Request for Proposals for a consultant to perform a Build-Out Analysis and Future Growth Study, authorized by the appropriation of \$25,000 under Article 36 of Annual Town Meeting 2001. A subcommittee reviewed the proposals received and established a short list of four firms for interviews. Three firms were interviewed in late October and a unanimous decision was made to hire the team of Philip B. Herr & Associates of Newton, Massachusetts and Applied Geographics, Inc of Boston.

The consultants then began a process of data gathering. Over a six-month period, they collected base data and began the evolution of a build-out model. They met with Town officials to establish accurate numerical assumptions for demographics and current resource consumption. They consolidated different data layers from a variety of sources to establish a base map of existing conditions. The Town benefited greatly from our highly evolved GIS (Geographic Information System), which the consultants were able to use to full advantage. Base maps were overlayed with various constraints – protected open space, wetlands, slopes, flood plains, etc. – and a map of developable land was produced.

The consultants then analyzed the type and amount of development that could take place on those lands within the constraints of the existing zoning bylaws. Through a variety of maps and graphs they communicated where that development could take place. This base map was called “Current Trends”. It is essentially a theoretical snapshot of what the Town would look like – how much development could take place under our current zoning, and where – if we do nothing to alter the direction of potential growth.

The CPC and consultants also looked at several possible “alternative scenarios” – what would happen, for instance, if we limited the amount of growth and focused it in certain sections of Town, such as the village centers.

The base map and alternative scenario maps were developed and then presented at a Town forum at the Amherst Regional High School on May 11, 2002. The participants were briefed on the build-out methodology, introduced to preliminary findings and invited to participate in the evaluation of the future development scenarios.

As the fiscal year closed out, the CPC was waiting for the consultants to prepare and present their final report.

John Kuhn, Chair